A CELESTIAL ODYSSEY THROUGH LITERATURE: AN APPLICATION OF *THE YOGA SUTRAS OF PATANJALI*

With Special Reference to
Sri Aurobindo's *The Synthesis of Yoga*
Rabindranath Tagore's *Sadhana: The Realisation of Life*.
Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha*
R.K. Narayana's *A Tiger for Malgudi*

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Yoga is an art, the philosophy and the group of techniques which is now revitalized after being lost and forgotten. It begins on the physical level and ends up purging the human being on the transcendental and spiritual plane. Yoga has an immense power of transforming the ailing body to perfection, sculpting the perturbed mind towards peace and elevating the soul stuck in material world to higher levels of reality and consciousness.

The word Yoga stems from Sanskrit word *yuj* 'to join'. The Sanskrit phrase *yujyate anena iti yogah* 'that which joins' the human being to the essential truth of life connotes the goal of Yoga. Yoga unites and connects an individual from the higher real world. It enables the individual to rise above from this material transient world and realise the ultimate goal of life. Yoga is not only about physical *aasans* ("postures") which keeps the body fit. Yoga is a way of life which assists the individual in balancing the *gunas* of the *manas* ("mind") and liberates him from the endless cycle of life and death.

In *The Bhagavadgita*, Lord Krishna in chapter II verse 50 expounds Yoga "One who has yoked his intelligence (with the Divine) (or is established in his intelligence) casts away even here both good and evil. Therefore strive for yoga, yoga is skill in action" (Radhakrishnan 137). Thus Yoga is elucidated as "*yogah karmasu kausalam"* which means "skill in action" (Radhakrishnan 137).

Lord Krishna elaborates Yoga also as the attainment of equilibrium of mind in all the situations. He says in chapter II verse 48 "Fixed in yoga, do thy work, O Winner of wealth (Arjuna), abandoning attachment, with an even mind in success and failure, for evenness of mind is called yoga" (Radhakrishnan 136). Thus Yoga is also an evenness of mind. It means if a person is calm and does not lose balance of mind either in failure or in success; he is said to have attained the state of Yoga.

Yoga is the blend of physical, mental and spiritual practice which originated in ancient India. The origin of Yoga traces back to pre-Vedic and Vedic Indian traditions. The root of Yoga is found in hymn 5.81.1 of the Rig Veda, a dedication to rising Sun-God in the morning (Savitri), interpreted as 'yoke' or 'yogically control'. Frawley asserts that the seeds of the Yoga are found in the ancient Vedas. He quotes:

> Yoking first the mind, having extended the intelligence, discerning the light of the fire, the Divine Sune (Savitar) bore it forth from the Earth. With a yogically controlled mind, in the energy of the Divine Sun, may we have the power to enter the world of light. Seers of the vast illumined seer yogically [युञ्जते, yunjante] control their minds and their intelligence. (25)

Rigveda, however, does not describe Yoga philosophy with the same meaning or context as in medieval or modern times.

So there is a shift of focus from Vedic sacrificial rites to Upanishads' practices that were more related to Yoga. Bryant says:

> The Gita, too, calls the Vedic ritualists "less intelligent", since any boons accruing from such materialism do not solve the ultimate problems of life – human suffering inherent in the cycle of birth and death (II.42—45). A move toward understanding higher and more ultimate truths of reality is the prime feature of the Upanishads. (xxi)

Early references to practices that later became part of yogic school of Hinduism are made in *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, the oldest Upanishad. The practice of *pranayama* ("consciously regulating breath") is mentioned in hymn 1.5.23 of *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, and the practice of *pratyahara* ("concentrating all of one's senses on self") is mentioned in hymn 8.15 of *Chandogya Upanishad*.

The *Katha Upanishad*, in verses 2.6.6 through 2.6.13 recommends a path to Self-knowledge, and this path, it calls Yoga.

> Only when *Manas* (mind) with thoughts and the five senses standstill, and when *Buddhi* (intellect, power to reason) does not waver, that they call the highest path. That is what one calls Yoga, the stillness of the senses, and concentration of the mind. It is not thoughtless heedless sluggishness, Yoga is creation and dissolution. (qtd. in Deussen 12)

The *Mahabharata*, the longest epic shows evidence of the evolution of the origin of Yoga. It depicts the organized manifestation of this practice and philosophy in the classical period marked by Patanjali from the Upanishadic period. *The Bhagavadgita* also gives ample of references to Yoga and practices of Yoga. Lord Krishna in chapter VI establishes the teachings of Yoga affirming the presence of Yoga since prehistoric era.

The section *Moksa-dharma* of Book twelve has a number of references which are related to the system of Yoga. For instance, the terms associated with this practice like Yoga are defined; *ekagrata* as concentration and *pranayama* as breath control by sage Vasistha. The terms *yoga* and *yogi* occur about nine hundred times in the epic. Bhisma also teaches the four stages of *dhyan-yoga* which is equivalent to the practice of meditation. Byrant says that ". . . the terminology and correlations of Bhisma's four stages of *dhyana-yoga* seem to have more in common with the four stages of Buddhist *samadhi*" (xxv).

Yoga philosophy is one of the six major orthodox schools of Hinduism. The reliable sources of *pramana* ("knowledge") for Yoga school are sense *pratyaksha* ("perception"), *anumaan* ("inference") and *shabda* ("word") which are the three *pramanas* out of six. The school of Yoga emphasizes the systematic progress towards

betterment of Self physically, mentally and spiritually. Thus it has influenced all other schools of Indian philosophies. The other school of philosophy includes *Samkhya*, *Nyaya*, *Vaisheshika*, *Mimasa*, and *Vedanta*. Yoga school of philosophy is closely related to the *Samkhya* school of Hinduism. The metaphysics of Yoga and *Samkhya* are built on the same dualist foundation. Both the school propagate that world is conceived of two realities - the *prakrati* ("matter") and *purusua* ("consciousness"). The *jiva* ("human being") is stuck in the quagmire of matter in diverse patterns stitched to senses, feelings, emotions, mind and activity. When one or other constituent overpowers the others then the state of *avidya* ("ignorance") and imbalance occurs and the human being is more and more away from the ultimate reality. The material bond of the individual strengthens and the divine bond weakens. When a human being moves towards the divine bond, identifies the self and wholly devotes himself to the celestial journey; then this situation is called *moksha* ("liberation") by both Yoga and *Samkhya* school of Hinduism.

The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali is a seminal text in the Indian Philosophy. It concisely portrays and delineates the panorama of human life and how it rises above. It projects the process of systematically examining the subtle and false identities of human mind until the jewel of real Self comes shining through. Bryant highlights the purpose of Yoga and says:

> To realize pure awareness as an entity distinct and autonomous from the mind (and of course, body), thought must be stilled and consciousness extracted from its embroilment with the mind and its incessant thinking nature. Only then can the soul be realized as an entity completely distinct from the mind (a distinction such clichés as "self-realization"

attempt to express), and the process to achieve this realization is *yoga*. (liv)

The text was compiled by sage Patanjali around 400 B.C. The text comprises four chapters. Chapter I of the *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* is entitled *Samadhi Pada*. It begins by introducing and defining Yoga. This is followed by a discussion of the two possible options for awareness, a description of the *vrittis* ("movement"), and how to control the *vrittis* by practice and dispassion. Then comes the division of *samadhi* ("meditative absorption") into *samprajnata* ("*samadhi* state still using mind and object") and *asamprajnata* ("ultimate state of awareness") and how to attain these. *Isvara* ("supreme being") is then introduced as the easy method of attaining *samadhi*. The chapter describes the distractions of the mind and their accompanying effects and prescribes meditation on any object to combat them. The chapter concludes with a discussion of *samprajnata samadhi* and preceding the final stage of *asamprajnata*.

Chapter II, entitled as *Sadhana Pada* begins with an introduction of *kriya* Yoga, its effect and a discussion of the *klesa* ("obstacles"), which it removes. *Karma* and its consequences are outlined and the principle of suffering established. This is followed by the characteristics of the seer and the seen, the conjunction between them and the definition of liberation. Next, the eight limbs of Yoga are introduced as the means to attain liberation, and the remainder of the chapter is dedicated to these: the *yamas* ("abstention") and their universality, the *niyamas* ("observances") and the side benefits accruing from observing them. Next, *aasans*, the third limb is presented by *pranayama*, the fourth limb and *pratayahara*.

Chapter III entitled as *Vibhuti Pada* begins by concluding the definitions of the last three limbs of Yoga which are distinguished from the others by constituting *samyama* ("performing last three limbs simultaneously on the same object"). A

discussion of the state of *nirodha* ("restraint") ensues followed by the metaphysics of the relationship between substratum and characteristic. The rest of the chapter explains how *samyama* is used as the finer tool to remove the subtler veils of ignorance.

Chapter IV of *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* is entitled *Kaivalya Pada*, begins by listing other means of attaining the *siddhis* ("mystic powers"). This is followed by some comments on *prakrti's* relationship with her effects and by the phenomenon of the creation of multiple minds by the *yogi*. The next section critiques Buddhist idealist notions of the mind followed by a discussion on the Yoga view of the relationship between mind and consciousness and of distractions to meditation. The chapter ends with *dharma-megha* ("cloud of virtue") and its effect and then ultimate liberation.

The proposed study aims to explore *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* in the light of two saint poets; Sri Aurobindo and Rabrindranath Tagore and two novelists Hermann Hesse and R.K. Narayana. The rationale behind selecting the above writers is to substantiate the development and relevance of the ancient discipline, Yoga down the ages. The Yoga has been the timeless and temporal principle. Aurobindo and Tagore profess the path for being one with the Divine through the medium of Yoga. The attempt to dive deep to study the two poets and the two novelists in the light of *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* is to demonstrate that the genre of literature too becomes yogic in its higher discourse.

Sri Aurobindo (1872 –1950) was an Indian nationalist, Hindu philosopher, yogi, guru and poet. He joined the Indian movement for independence from British rule. For a while he was one of its influential leaders and then became a religious reformer, introducing his visions on human progress and spiritual evolution.

Aurobindo was imprisoned by the British for writing articles against British rule in India. During his stay in the jail he had mystical and spiritual experiences, after which he moved to Pondicherry, leaving politics for spiritual work. During his stay in Pondicherry, Aurobindo developed a method of spiritual practice which he called Integral Yoga. The central theme of his vision was the evolution of human life into a life divine.

Aurobindo's literary work *The Life Divine* deals with theoretical aspects of Integral Yoga. *The Synthesis of Yoga* deals with practical guidance to Integral Yoga; and *Savitri: A Legend and a Symbol* remains an epic poem. His works also include philosophy, poetry, translations and commentaries on the Vedas, Upanishads and *The Bhagavadgita*. He was nominated for the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1943 and for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1950.

The proposed study aims to make a comparative study between Patanjali's Yoga and Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga. After Patanjali the Yoga was practised, tested and developed by a large number of the spiritual leaders of Indian culture and various commentaries were written on *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*. The Yoga practices, which have their origin in the Vedas find their culmination in the writings of Sri Aurobindo, one of the most important and influential philosophers of the twentieth century India.

The Synthesis of Yoga is Sri Aurobindo's principal work on Yoga, comparing the methods of the various schools of traditional Yoga, and providing the comprehensive way for following the true path to Divine consciousness. It is the primary work on Integral Yoga, the system of Yoga that Sri Aurobindo developed. The book originally appeared in serial form in *Arya*, published between 1914 and 1921. *The Synthesis on Yoga* is divided into four parts: the Yoga of Divine Works, of Integral Knowledge, of Divine Love, and of Self Perfection. The first three corresponds to the

three-fold Yoga of *The Bhagavadgita* (i.e. *karma Yoga, jnana Yoga,* and *bhakti Yoga*), while the last section gives Sri Aurobindo's own development and synthesis of these three paths.

The teaching of Sri Aurobindo starts from that of the ancient sages of India that behind the appearances of the universe there is the reality of a being and consciousness, a self of all things, one and eternal. All beings are united in that one self and spirit but divided by a certain separativity of consciousness, an ignorance of their true self and reality in the mind, life and body. It is possible by a certain psychological discipline to remove this veil of separative consciousness and become aware of the true self, the Divinity within us and all.

Sri Aurobindo's teaching states that this one being and consciousness is involved here in matter. Evolution is the method by which it liberates itself. Life is the first step of this release of consciousness; mind is the second; but the evolution does not finish with mind, it awaits a release into something greater, a consciousness which is spiritual and supramental. The next step of the evolution must be towards the development of Supermind and Spirit. For only then will the involved Divinity in things release itself entirely and it becomes possible for life to manifest perfection.

It is not, however, by the mental will in man that this can be wholly done, for the mind goes only to a certain point and after that can only move in a circle. A conversion has to be made, a turning of the consciousness by which mind has to change into the higher principle. This method is to be found through the ancient psychological discipline and practice of Yoga. The traditional Yoga has been attempted by renunciation from the world and a disappearance into the height of the Self or Spirit.Sri Aurobindo treated the material world as real as the spiritual one, because for him all is *Brahman* and all is the manifestation of the same reality. If *Brahman* is the absolute

spiritual reality, the universe of matter is equally true as it is the manifestation of the same spiritual reality. The psychological discipline of Yoga can be used to that end by opening all the parts of the being to a conversion or transformation through the working of the higher supramental principle.

The aim of Aurobindo's Yoga is an inner self-development by which each one who follows it can in time discover the One Self in all and evolves a higher consciousness than the mental, spiritual and supramental consciousness which will transform and divinise human nature.

The proposed study endeavours to sketch out the comparison and contrast of the principles of Yoga drawn by sage Patanjali and Sri Aurobindo.

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) was a Bengali poet, philosopher, visual artist, playwright, composer, and novelist whose work reshaped Bengali literature and music in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He became Asia's first Nobel laureate when he won the 1913 Nobel Prize in Literature. He earned renown as a man of letters; but the religious sensibility of his writing is so acute, so highly developed, that he is more properly regarded as a sage and mystic.

Sadhana:The Realization of Life (1913) is a prime example of his lyrical musings. *Sadhana:The Realization of Life* is a collection of essays, most of which he delivered in the Harvard University, describing Indian beliefs, philosophy and culture from different viewpoints. In modest sized essays, Tagore tackles such imposing subjects as self-realization and soul consciousness, and his compelling insights render the subject beautiful. He says "Only he who knows that the whole world is a creation of joy has attained the final truth" (Tagore 82). Drawing on India's vast heritage of spiritual literature, Tagore shows that every aspect and every moment of life is *sadhana*, a spiritual practice.

Tagore masterfully brings the spiritual truths behind the profound questions to light, with his lucid explanations of the Sanskrit verses of the Upanishads and the eternal teachings of Lord Jesus and Buddha. The study of *Sadhana: The Realization of Life* in the light of *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* may project the similarities between the system of Patanjali's and Tagore's Yoga.

This work also aims to study the implications of *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* in literature. The selected novels for study would be Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha* and R.K. Narayana's *A Tiger for Malgudi*.

R. K. Narayan (1906-2001), full name Rasipuram Krishnaswami Iyer Narayanaswami, was an Indian writer, best known for his works set in the fictional South Indian town of Malgudi. The basic ideology underlying Narayana's fiction is a quest for the possibilities of spiritual renaissance and its further development into spiritual liberation.

A Tiger for Malgudi is a 1983 novel by R. K. Narayan depicting a tiger in the first person. Deeply moving is the attachment of the tiger to the monk and the monk's care for the tiger. R.K. Narayan's story combines Hindu mysticism with Malgudi comedy, viewing human absurdities through the eyes of a wild animal and revealing how, quite unexpectedly, Raja finds sweet companionship and peace.

The study of *A Tiger for Malgudi* in the light of *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* provides new perspectives of evaluating his characters who are constantly engaged in spiritual struggle amidst the clutches of never satiating materialistic hunger. The research would attempt to evaluate the character of the Yogi of the novel. *A Tiger for Malgudi* talks about the life of an ascetic who in order to achieve the goal of spiritual liberation reaches the stage of *asmaprajnata samadhi* as expounded by sage Patanjali

Kaivalya (“liberation of the soul”) is attained with the cessation of the function of the instruments of reception - senses, intellect and mind. In this state, "consciousness remains all alone for all time"(Aranya14). After having realized the ultimate truth about all knowable things through *samprajnata* concentration, the mind is gradually brought to a state of being devoid of any latent impressions through *asamprajnata samadhi*. When it stops to form any further impressions and continues to stay in this state permanently, the consciousness is said to attain the state of *kaivalya*. Narayan's characters Raju and the yogi of *A Tiger for Malgudi* through their dint of efforts reach the *asamprajnata* state. The yogi takes a step further ahead by entering the phase of the *samadhi* of the perpetually closed kind to attain *kaivalya*.

Hermann Hesse (1877-1962) was a German-Swiss poet, novelist, and painter. In 1946, he received the Nobel Prize in Literature. His best known works include *Steppenwolf*, *Siddhartha*, and *The Glass Bead Game* which explore an individual's search for spirituality outside society. In a conversation with Miguel Serrano, Hermann Hesse commented about the belief in God, "You should let yourself be carried away, like the clouds in the sky. You shouldn’t resist. God exists in your destiny just as much as he does in these mountains and in that lake” (Serrano 21).

Siddhartha is a 1922 novel by Hermann Hesse that deals with the spiritual journey of self-discovery of a man named Siddhartha. Hesse portrays the protagonist’s spiritual quest which shares the similarities with *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*. Siddhartha, the protagonist once stuck in the muddy ignorance rises above with the aid of yogic principles and embraces the man’s hidden treasure by opening the new book of knowledge, power and peace.

The literature review reveals that most of the researches have focused primarily on the physical aspects of the discipline Yoga. For instance Vishwas Mandlik in the

research papers entitled *Effect of Yoga Training Package on Heart Patients* and *Effect of Omkar Chanting on Concentration, Memory and Level of Fatigue* emphasize on the physical benefits of Yoga. The former talks about the effect of six months of regular practice of a package of selected yogic practices which includes *asanas, pranayama,* meditation, *yoga nidra* and *omkar* chanting and latter deals with *omkar* recitation which is an important *yogic* practice. The vibration due to *omkar* meditation increases the efficiency of cells and the organs. B.N. Gangadhar in his study *Yoga Therapy in Mental Health Building Evidence* again approaches with same physical perspective. Nilesh Gajjar in his work *Effect Of Yoga Exercises on Achievement, Memory and Reasoning Ability* studies the effect of Yoga on the academic achievement, verbal reasoning ability & short term memory (STM) of the student. Durgaben Navinchandra Joshi has worked on different topic, entitled *Similarity and Particularity of the Yogas Preached by Srimad Bhagvad Gita with Reference to the Sutras of Patanjali Yogdarshanam*. He has drawn the similarities in the Yoga preached by Lord Krishna and professed by sage Patanjali.

Similarly the selected authors have captured the attention of many researchers and critics but the survey reveals that they focus on other aspects. Debashish Banarjee in *Sri Aurobindo, India, And Ideological Discourse* considers Sri Aurobindo's nationalism and contextualizes it within the colonial-national interchange and the modern understanding of the nation. It then problematizes Hindutva's attempts to reductively appropriate Sri Aurobindo's pluralistic and evolutionary nationalism. In the second part, a close reading is conducted of a well-known nationalist speech of Sri Aurobindo, the Uttarpara Speech, to draw out the significance of his ideas of nation soul. The third part applies the implications of this nationalism to a consideration of Sri Aurobindo's social ideas – concerning nations and communities in their modern and

postmodern trajectories. Dr. Nivedita Deshmukh and Mrs. Menka Mishra in paper entitled *A Study on the Educational Thought of Sri Aurobindo* deal with different views on the methods of teaching and tell how to perfect the instruments of knowledge and encourage pupil in educational process.

R.K. Narayana has also been analyzed from diverse perspectives. For instance in *The Conflict between Tradition and Modernity in R.K. Narayana* by Prof. K.V. Dominic talks about East-West conflict. Madhukar Nigam in *R. K. Narayana as a Post-Colonialist Novelist* talks about the post-colonial aspects of his novels. Kiran Kamboj in the book *Reflections on India: The Novels of Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan and Raja Rao* deals with pre-independence period in its various facets; caste divide, movement for freedom, social, political and religious life in a comparative framework. S.R. Ramtake in *R.K.Narayan and His Social Perspectives* brings out vividly Narayan's attitude to life, his firm grip of Hindu ethos of which he is the product, and his failure to come out of it, though the West Wind has blown much of its dust.

Tagore and Hesse have also been studied with a wide range of perspectives. In the book *The Radical Appeal of Hermann Hesse's Alternative Community* by Lawerence Wilde quest for spiritual self-fulfilment are the key themes in the novels of Hermann Hesse. The book *The German Mosaic Cultural and Linguistic Diversity in Society* by Carol Aisha Blackshire-Belay talks about the culture and tradition of German society in context with Hesse.

Humanism and Nationalism in Tagore's Novels by Kunjo Singh is a book which aims at an appraisal of Tagore's novels. It highlights his thematic concerns and novelistic technique. The book also provides a comprehensive and authentic account of his literary genius and his vision of the human predicament. The book studies Tagore's art of writing novels for promotion of human value and national integration. *Empire,*

Nationalism and the Postcolonial World: Rabindranath Tagore's Writings on History, Politics and Society by Michael Collins is a book which bridges the gap between Tagore studies and postcolonial history. Khandekar Surendra S. in research paper entitled *Rabindranath Tagore as a Lyric Poet* focuses on lyrical poems of Rabindranath Tagore. *Sadhana: The Realisation of Life* has also been analysed from various perspectives. The research papers entitled *Tagore's Philosophy of Life – A Study of Sadhana* and *Rabindranath Tagore's Idea of Evil: A Philosophical Study* delineate the novel on the philosophical plane.

The proposed study shall strive to make a point of departure from the above mentioned seminal research contributions in the realm of Yoga as it would add new dimensions to the existing philosophical ancient treatise, *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*. It would provide an analysis of the works of Sri Aurobindo, Rabindranath Tagore, R.K. Narayana and Hermann Hesse within the framework of *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*. With concrete supportive illustrations from the selected works, the study would attempt to provide an in depth exploration of the main concepts of *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*. Such a study would not only provide a new interpretative framework to the discipline of Yoga but also seek to prove that how the influence of Yoga can help literature in achieving universality. It will open a new vista of knowledge for students of literature as the study will concentrate on the implicational aspects of *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*.

The objectives of the proposed study would be:

1. To study Yoga from the historical perspective.
2. To apply the notions of *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* in the authors undertaken for the study.

3. To attempt a comparative study of Aurobindo's concept of Integral Yoga and Patanjali's system of Yoga.
4. To study the relevance of *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* in modern context.

Keeping in view the above objectives the tentative chapter scheme of the proposed study would be as follows:

CHAPTER I- Yoga and Yoga Sutra: An Introduction

CHAPTER II- Aurobindo's *The Synthesis of Yoga* and *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*: A Study in Parallelism and Contrast

CHAPTER III- The Relation of the Individual to the Universe: A Study of Tagore's *Sadhana: The Realization of Life* and *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*

CHAPTER IV- Quest for Infinity through R.K. Narayana's *A Tiger for Malgudi*: An Application of *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*

CHAPTER V- Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha* and *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*: An Interpretation

CHAPTER VI- Conclusion

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